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Connecticut General Assembly
Environment Committee

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of Bike Groton located in the Town of Groton, I write to ask you to support Raised House Bill 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways and Recreational Trails.

This important bill would increase the bond authorization for the Recreational Trails and Greenways Grants program to \$6 million. As you may be aware, in Fall, 2021, DEEP issued a request for recreational trails proposals with only \$3 million available and received 65 applications requesting over \$22 million. The \$3 million was granted to twenty worthy projects, but another \$7 million in highly ranked proposals were unable to be funded, and we expect the ongoing need for investments in Connecticut's outdoor recreation infrastructure to continue.

We have observed and been involved in the energy and enthusiasm volunteer groups like ourselves devote to trail related initiatives. There are few sources of funding that can kick-start these important community-building projects. The RTP program has historically been underfunded, but the complete lack of funding followed by 2021's small allotment has been especially discouraging for grass roots groups like ours that advocate for improved conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians.

There are few publicly funded investments that generate more support and gratitude from residents and constituents across Connecticut than trails. The benefits are well established from health and wellness, to equity, to environmental conservation, to a diversified transportation system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this matter.

Sincerely,

Brian Kent, President Bike Groton
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